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Viewing cable 08GENEVA446, RESPONSES IN GENEVA TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL \

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08GENEVA446**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08GENEVA446	2008-06-13 15:39	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	US Mission Geneva

Appears in these articles:

http://www.letemps.ch/swiss_papers

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGV #0446/01 1651539
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 131539Z JUN 08
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6592
INFO RUEHZJ/HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1761
RUEHAN/AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO 0069
RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 0100
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0956
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1977
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0177
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUN LUANDA 0020
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0284
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 0282
RUEHOU/AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU 0152
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0364
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 0316
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0613
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 0187
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 4986
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 2804
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 0169
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 1222

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2790
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0086
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 1097
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2755

2008-06-13 15:39:00 08GENEVA446 US Mission Geneva CONFIDENTIAL 08STATE61034 VZCZCXYZ0000\
PP RUEHWEB\
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6592\
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1761\
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RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 1097\
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2755\
C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 000446 \

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2018 \
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNHRC](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: RESPONSES IN GENEVA TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL \
DEMARCHE \

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REF: STATE 61034 (NOTAL) \

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Classified By: Ambassador Warren W. Tichenor. Reasons: 1.4 (b/d). \

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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador and Mission officers deployed \
reftel language in discussions with numerous delegations \
concerning the new USG posture toward the Human Rights \
Council. Most delegations with whom we spoke agreed that the \
Council was seriously flawed. While a few, notably Poland \
and Italy, saw the USG decision as the Council's death knell, \
most expressed disappointment with the new posture, arguing \
that it would only complicate efforts to counter negative \
trends in the Council. Many of our closest friends in the \
Western Group doubted that it would serve our common \
strategic goals. Amid rumors that the U.S. was adopting its \
new posture for ulterior motives, such as to avoid scrutiny \
under the Universal Periodic Review, most delegations also \
urged that the USG further articulate in public the reasoning \
behind our disengagement. We believe further explanation of \
our position, possibly through an op-ed, would be beneficial. \
END SUMMARY. \

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[1](#)2. (U) The new USG posture toward the Human Rights Council \
met with keen interest from Geneva-based delegations. Per \
reftel guidance, the Ambassador met with a large number of \
his counterparts, notably from like-minded governments, to \
articulate the USG position. Mission officers also did so \
with their counterparts from a range of delegations. \

\
BROAD DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE COUNCIL \

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[1](#)3. (C) Most like-minded delegations, as well as many others, \

stressed that they share our general disappointment with the \ Council. Canada, Australia, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, \ Poland and Norway voiced among the strongest sense of \ disappointment with the Council, emphasizing that they were \ troubled by many of the Council's decisions of the past year. \ Even the Russian ambassador commented privately to us that \ the Council had not performed well, although he stressed that \ it was a new institution that might still prove itself. (The \ Norwegian ambassador told us that the Russian ambassador had \ privately made the same comment to her, noting that without \ the U.S. as a counterweight, Russia might be under greater \ pressure to even more strongly support the positions of the \ Organization of the Islamic Conference.) Only the Brazilian \ Deputy PermRep, among our interlocutors, argued that the \ Council's overall record was good and that it had served to \ advance human rights goals. \

REACTIONS TO OUR POLICY: A STEP TOWARD COUNCIL'S DEMISE... \

14. (C) In their conversations with Ambassador Tichenor, his \ Polish and Italian counterparts both argued that our \ disengagement marked what the former described as "the \ beginning of the end of the Council." The Italian ambassador \ said his government had become sufficiently frustrated with \ the workings of that body to begin reconsidering its own \ engagement. The USG move would be a further spur to such \ thinking by his government. Similarly, both the Moroccan and \ Japanese ambassadors told Ambassador Tichenor that without \ the participation of the U.S., the Council would be a less \ meaningful -- and perhaps even meaningless -- organization. \

...OR PLAYING INTO OUR OPPONENTS' HANDS? \

15. (C) The Danish ambassador echoed some of that same message \ but did not predict the Council's eventual demise. She told \ Ambassador Tichenor that, given the Council's record, the \ USG's decision was understandable. The U.S. had tried hard \ to improve the Council's workings, making our current \ frustration all the more reasonable. She expressed relief \ that Denmark was not a Council member, and said that her \ government might give serious thought to disengagement if \ that body's functioning deteriorated further. \

16. (C) The Danish ambassador was quick to add, however, that \ for the moment, her government would continue to engage in \ the Council, and that our move would complicate efforts to \ counter negative trends in that body. Most of our \ interlocutors shared that view. The Maldives ambassador told \ us that it was too early to judge that the Council was a \ total failure, and that countries like the U.S. should work \ to improve it rather than walking away from it. The Dutch \ ambassador commented that though he respected USG plans to \ focus our human rights efforts in other venues, his \ government continued to see Geneva as a key human rights \ venue. USG disengagement was disappointing, both because it \ ran counter to the U.S. "can-do" spirit that he admired and \ because it would weaken those working against attacks on \ human rights in the Council. \

17. (C) The Canadian ambassador expressed similar views. \ Stressing that Canada often stood alone among Council \ members, enjoying only weak EU support, he expressed regret \ that he would be even more isolated without behind-the-scenes \ USG help. The timing of our move was particularly bad, he \ argued to Ambassador Tichenor, given that the Council's new \ president, who will come from the Africa Group, could prove \ more difficult to deal with than the incumbent president, \ particularly if pressured by less reasonable forces in that \ Group and in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. He \ concluded that countries such as Egypt and Pakistan would \ take advantage of the U.S. disengagement to further press \ their causes, and would enjoy even more open support from \ Russia and China, both of which would become more "brutal" in \ their dealings in the Council (because of the absence of \ countervailing U.S. influence). Many other interlocutors, \

including Hungary and Australia, strongly shared that view. \

18. (C) While sharing the opinion that the new USG posture \ might inadvertently play into the hands of leading OIC \ countries, several interlocutors questioned the timing and/or \ expressed disappointment for other reasons as well. \ Australia said that with High Commissioner for Human Rights \ Louise Arbour's departure, this was not a good moment to lose \ the USG's influence in shaping the relationship between the \ High Commissioner's office and the Council, which is in a \ fragile transitional stage. Slovakia regretted the \ suddenness of the U.S. move so soon after Slovakia's election \ to the Council, characterizing it as resulting in \ embarrassment to the Slovak government. The UK, Canada and \ Poland noted that they were taken by surprise and would have \ been better able to strategize had they received advance \ notice before the Council session of the USG decision, or \ even been consulted on it. \

LOOKING FORWARD TO CONTINUED COOPERATION \

19. (C) Many of the countries that expressed regret at USG \ disengagement said they intended to continue cooperating with \ the U.S. to the extent possible, including by providing us \ with information on the state-of-play of developments in the \ Council. The Nigerian ambassador, who will almost certainly \ become the new Council President with the end of the \ incumbent's term next week, told Ambassador Tichenor that he \ looked forward to working hard to shape the body into \ something worthy of U.S. support and engagement, and that he \ would do what he could, in conjunction with us, to achieve \ that end. \

NEED TO FURTHER PUBLICLY ARTICULATE OUR APPROACH \

10. (C) Many interlocutors, including Western allies, \ expressed hope that the USG would more fully articulate its \ decision, particularly to their publics. High Commissioner \ Arbour also strongly argued that position to the Ambassador. \ They noted that some countries had taken advantage of the \ decision and its suddenness to spread rumors impugning USG \ motives. According to one rumor, supposedly fueled by Cuba, \ the USG had decided to disengage in order to avoid coming up \ for Universal Periodic Review scrutiny; though the rumor was \ obviously false, particularly given that the U.S. is to be \ reviewed in 2010, we received numerous questions about it. \

11. (SBU) At least from our perspective in Geneva, we believe \ an affirmative public statement, possibly in the form of an \ op-ed laying out more fully the justifiable rationale behind \ our approach, would be beneficial. \

TICHENOR \